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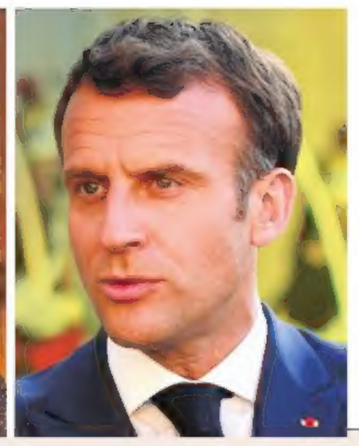

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FRENCH PRESIDENT MACRON DIALS PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

The two leaders on Thursday discussed efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the war in Ukraine and Gaza conflict, apart from bilateral relations

REVIEW OF INDO-FRANCE BILATERAL TIES

The two leaders reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation, including in trade, defence, civil nuclear cooperation, technology and energy. "They reaffirmed joint commitment to strengthen India-France Strategic partnership and mark 2026 as 'Year of Innovation' in a befitting manner," the PMO said. The call was initiated by the French side

CALL FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

- Macron was among a host of European leaders who accompanied Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his talks with US President Donald Trump this week in Washington DC
- Modi reiterated India's consistent support for peaceful resolution of the conflicts and early restoration of peace and stability, PMO said

2026

IS WHEN INDIA GETS PRESIDENCY OF BRICS AND FRANCE OF G7

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China firmly with India on Don's unfair trade squeeze

Ambassador Xu Feihong says silence only emboldens the 'US bully'

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

IN a striking show of solidarity, Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong on Thursday condemned the United States' recent tariff hike on Indian goods, calling it "bullying" and pledging that China "will firmly stand with India" against what he described as unfair trade practices. Speaking in New Delhi, Xu said Beijing "fully opposes" the US move, noting that tariffs on Indian goods could soar to 50% if Washington follows through on its 25% penalty for importing Russian oil and further escalation could still be on the table.

"... the US has long benefited greatly from free trade but now uses tariffs as bargain chips to demand exorbitant prices from various countries. The US imposed tariffs of up to 50% on India, and has even threatened for more. China firmly opposes it. In the face of such acts, silence only emboldens the bully. China will firmly stand with India to uphold the multilateral trading system with the world trade," he said.

Xu Feihong, Chinese envoy

Xu's unusually direct comments come at a time of heightened global trade tensions and just weeks ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit.

The Chinese envoy framed the US-India tariff row as an opportunity for Beijing and New Delhi to close ranks, urging both Asian powers to move beyond competition and build "strategic mutual trust." "India and China are not rivals, we are partners. We must manage our differences through dialogue and strengthen cooperation," Xu said. Pointing to the global implications of their relationship, Xu added: "India and China are the double engines of economic growth in Asia. Our unity benefits not only Asia, but the world at large."

He also emphasised the need for both countries to play a leading role in shaping a more equitable global order. "As major developing countries, India and China have a responsibility to promote a multipolar world. Unity and cooperation are the only way forward," he said.

NO RATIONALE BEHIND PENALTY LEVY: JAISHANKAR

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

IN a pointed diplomatic signal amid escalating US pressure, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Thursday, reinforcing India's strategic ties with Moscow even as Washington doubles down on tariffs and warnings over New Delhi's energy trade with Russia. The high-level meeting, part of a broader effort to finalise President Putin's visit to India year-end came hours after Jaishankar held wide-ranging discussions with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

S Jaishankar, foreign minister

The talks focused heavily on boosting bilateral trade and shielding their energy partnership from potential US penalty. At a joint press briefing with Lavrov, Jaishankar publicly questioned the rationale behind recent US tariffs and criticism targeting India's oil purchases from Russia. "We are not the biggest purchasers of Russian oil; that is China. We are not the biggest purchasers of LNG; that is the European Union. We are not the country which has the biggest trade surge with Russia after 2022; I think there are some countries to the South," he said.

The US recently imposed a punitive 25% reciprocal tariff on Indian goods, along with an additional 25% duty specifically targeting India's Russian oil purchases. "We have done everything asked of us in the past to stabilise the global energy market, including buying oil from Russia," Jaishankar noted, pointing out that India also imports significant volumes of oil from the US.

"We believe that relations between India and Russia have been among the steadiest of the major relationships in the world after the Second World War," Jaishankar said.

V-P poll: Oppn's Sudershan Reddy files papers

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE battle lines for the upcoming Vice Presidential election were drawn on Thursday when the Opposition's pick former Supreme Court judge B Sudershan Reddy filed his nomination papers.

In a show of strength, several top Opposition leaders, including Congress' Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, SP leader Ramgopal Yadav, DMK's Tiruchi Siva, TMC's Satabdi Roy, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut and CPI(M)'s John Brittas accompanied Reddy during the filing of nomination papers. The elections will be held on September 9, where Reddy will face NDA candidate Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan.

B Sudershan Reddy files his nomination papers in Delhi on Wednesday as Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Sharad Pawar look on | PTI

After filing his papers, the retired judge said if elected, he would discharge the role with impartiality, dignity, and a steadfast commitment to dialogue and decorum.

Later in the evening, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor Arvind Kejriwal called on Reddy at his Delhi residence and said his party will support his candidature.

The electoral college for the vice presidential election comprises members of both Houses of Parliament. Nominated members of the Rajya Sabha can also cast their votes.

The effective strength of the electoral college is 781 and the majority mark is 391.

JDU, TDP cagey on bills to remove arrested ministers

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE National Democratic Alliance's key allies Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Janata Dal (United) appears to be treading cautiously on the three bills that seek to remove prime minister, chief ministers, and ministers under arrest for 30 consecutive days on serious charges.

The bills have been sent to a Joint Committee of Parliament (JPC) comprising 21 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha for further scrutiny.

RS approves motion to send bills to JPC

The Rajya Sabha on Thursday adopted a motion to concur with the Lok Sabha's decision to send the three bills providing a legal framework for the removal of arrested ministers to a Joint Parliamentary Committee | P11

When asked about the party's stand on the contentious bills, JDU MP Sanjay Kumar Jha declined to state its position. "The party is yet to discuss the issue. I cannot give an official statement now," he said. Another JDU leader said the party will discuss the issue as it has been referred to the JPC.

While the Opposition parties allege that the bill is to keep allies Nitish Kumar and N Chandrababu Naidu in check, the TDP dismissed such claims. When asked about the bill, TDP leader and Union Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said the bill will be studied at the JPC and the concerns will be addressed, if there are any.

During introduction of the bills in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, Congress member K C Venugopal said the intent is to target allies.

"When Vote Chori is on everyone's minds, When Rahul Gandhi ji's Yatra is getting unparalleled support, When Opposition Governments need to be targeted, When allies like Chandrababu Naidu garu and Nitish Kumar ji need to be threatened... The Home Minister brings this dangerous Bill that strikes at the heart of the Constitutional principles of federalism," he posted on social media.

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44 Pages, including 24 of indulge (tabloid)

Snehamayi accuses Sujatha, others of false murder claim

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mangaluru

ACTIVIST Snehamayi Krishna from Mysuru on Thursday lodged a complaint at Dharmasthala police station against Sujatha Bhat, activists Girish Mattannavar, Mahesh Shetty Timarodi and YouTuber MD Sameer, accusing them of making false claims that MBBS student Ananya Bhat was murdered in Dharmasthala, and filing a false complaint.

In his complaint, Krishna alleged that Sujatha Bhat did not have a daughter named Ananya Bhat. Sujatha, Timarodi, Mattannavar, MD Sameer and others made false claims that Sujatha had a daughter Ananya who was pursuing MBBS, and she was allegedly murdered when she visited Dharmasthala temple with her friends.

CONTINUED ON P4

EXPRESS READ

Bike taxis are back on Bengaluru roads

BENGALURU: App-based transport platforms Uber, Rapido and Ola have resumed bike taxi services here after a two-month ban. Operations were resumed a day after the Karnataka High Court adjourned hearings on appeals to September 22, directing the government to review the matter on Wednesday. **P2**

50% rebate on traffic e-challan dues

BENGALURU: The government, through an order dated August 21, 2025, has announced a 50% concession on fines recorded in the Police Department's traffic e-Challan system. The concession will be applicable to cases settled between August 23 and September 12, 2025.

BENEATH THE BLUE

Samudrayaan aquanaut eyes world record in solo deep sea diving

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

'SAMUDRAYAAN' mission test pilot and former Naval officer **Jatinder Pal Singh** (38) has his eyes set on creating a world record in solo deep diving in the Mariana Trench -- the deepest oceanic trench on the Earth, located in the Pacific Ocean. Singh is the first Indian to have dived deepest into the ocean (North Atlantic) at 5003 metres -- maximum so far by an Indian -- on August 6 as the test pilot of 'Samudrayaan'.

A project of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), 'Samudrayaan' will be the first manned deep sea venture, scheduled for 2027 in 'Matsya 6000', an indigenous submersible developed by the NIOT. The hull or human sphere of 'Matsya' is being developed by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The manned ocean expedition is being implemented as part of the Rs 4800-crore 'Deep Ocean Mission' (DOM) by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai. NIOT is an autonomous society under the MoES.

Singh (38), from Tanda village in Akhnoor in Jammu & Kashmir, hails from a defence background. He joined the NIOT in January 2024 as a test pilot of 'Matsya 6000'. He, along with four other ocean scientists from the Chennai institute, were sent to France this month to participate in deep-ocean human scientific expeditions onboard the submersible NAUTILE developed by the French marine institute IFREMER. Singh and Ramesh Raju, deputy project director, 'Matsya 6000', NIOT, took the deep dive in the Atlantic in preparation for 'Samudrayaan' on August 5 and 6. Raju went up to 4025 metres and Singh dived up to 5003 metres the next day. Both, in the company of a NAUTILE pilot and co-pilot.

Narrating the around 12-hour-long deep sea exploration in the Atlantic Ocean, where the two Indian aquanauts hoisted the Tricolour in the depths of the ocean, Singh said it was an unforgettable and thrilling experience. "I now wish to create a world record in solo deep diving as a tribute to my country," said Singh. The record is currently held by American explorer Victor Vesovo. In 2019, Vesovo piloted the deepest solo dive ever made, at 10,928 metres inside the Mariana Trench. **P7**

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